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HARVEY, WILLIAM
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BUNDY, MC GEORGE
EXECUTIVE ACTION CAPABILITY

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MEMORANDUM.

TO : The File

FROM : David W. Belin

SUBJECT : Conference with McGeorge Bundy, April 8, 1975.

Mr. Belin: This is a memorandum of a conference with McGeorge Bundy on April 8, 1975. Mr. Bundy has refreshed his recollection following his testimony before the Commission on April 7 and wishes to make some additions to the record.

Mr. Bundy: You asked me yesterday whether I had any recollection of whether the word "poison" or something to that effect--whether I had any recollection of that kind of activity or proposal in relation to the Castro regime and I think I said I did not, and I did not as of yesterday. But overnight I have had a vague recollection which I cannot pinpoint in time that there was discussion that I knew about at some time of a proposal or scheme or project that did involve poison, and, as I recall it, the characteristic that sticks in my memory is the--that it involved a rather large-scale use of poison and, as I recollect it, it was never approved. In the first instance on that practical ground and I think the second question whether it would have been approved, if it had been less hairbrained, was never reached. And this is, I think, the way in which proposals of this sort, which did come from time to time, not just with respect to assassinations but other proposals under the MONGOOSE scheme, they were reviewed in the first instance for practicability and I don't--and only then after that for wisdom or political rightness, and I recall NO proposal for liquidation that ever got past the first stage to the second.

Mr. Belin: I also talked to you, Mr. Bundy, about whether or not there might have been any discussion in early 1961 or any other time with regard to a request from the White House to the CIA for the CIA to develop what was called an executive action capability, which was defined as a general stand-by capability to carry out assassinations when required. Do you ever remember any discussions along those lines?

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Mr. Bundy: Well, I recall the words "executive action capability" more clearly today than I did yesterday, and I think I said yesterday that they rang some sort of bell. But I do NOT have any recollection as to when I knew about that or who requested it or how much was done under it. I don't recall having any continuing interest in or information about that particular activity.

Mr. Belin: Do you recall that executive action capability was in substance discussed as a general stand-by capability to carry out assassinations at that time--I'm not saying there was direction to undertake a plan but at least the development of the stand-by capability?

Mr. Bundy: I think it was just that--an authorization to have some kind of stand-by capability for action against individuals.

Mr. Belin: Now, I'm going to turn to the Summer of 1962. Before we started this transcribing of your remarks you indicated that you don't remember any specific plan pertaining to attempted poisoning of any Cuban leader during 1961, but that you do remember some discussions that may have developed into this area sometime in 1962. Is that accurate?

Mr. Bundy: Well, I think it is perhaps a slightly more precise way of saying it is that you have described to me a broad outline of plans as you understand them that existed in January or February 1961 and I simply have no recollection of plans that meet that description. You don't have one mind to believe--and I believe my memory tells me in a more general way that my knowledge of a scheme or idea of using poison relates to the year 1962.

Mr. Belin: Do you remember any discussions at any meeting of the MONGOOSE group where this might have been discussed? Either the general plan of possible liquidation or the particular plan of poison?

Mr. Bundy: I don't have any recollection of where or how I heard about the poisoning--a poisoning plan. I know that--at least I know that I never knew of any approval of such a plan. My recollection is the opposite--that it was a hairbrain scheme that did not receive approval even on the ground of practicability as distinct from the ground of what you would make a final decision to go ahead. Now, as to meetings where such a thing might have been discussed, the only one I have any recollection of--and it is a refreshed recollection--I would not have known about it a month ago--is the one which we discussed yesterday on August 10, 1962 and I do NOT have any recollection of what specifically was said in that meeting.

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Mr. Belin: Do you have any recollection that there was any direction NOT to undertake any such plans?

Mr. Bundy: I think there was--there was--a general attitude toward this matter in which the Agency was permitted to produce proposals and, although I recall nobody encouraging them to do so, that may have happened, and as I said yesterday, I draw a distinction between considering contingencies of this sort and actually giving them approval. That I think is the way in which the Kennedy Administration approached the matter. I do not think there was a flat, general ban on considering such possibilities.

Mr. Belin: Earlier, before we started taping, you said that if there had been any specific discussion of that, that you were not a party to it and that it might have--

Mr. Bundy: A discussion of what?

Mr. Belin: of a direction to carry out a plan, that you certainly were not a party to such a discussion. Is that what you said?

Mr. Bundy: I am absolutely certain that I never knew of or believed that there was any authorization to go ahead with an effort to liquidate Castro, or any other Cuban leader.

Mr. Belin: And I think that you also said that if there would have been any such discussion and you said you knew of none, it would have been directly between the President and the Director of Central Intelligence--

Mr. Bundy: THAT's an inference. I don't know where else--who else--would have sought the authority of the Agency or who else could have given it from the White House.

Mr. Belin: Is there anything else that you want to add so far as clarifying or correcting your testimony of April 7 before the Commission?

Mr. Bundy: You asked me yesterday whether I had met Mr. William Harvey--I think that's his name--

Mr. Belin: Yes.

Mr. Bundy: --and I said I recollected the name and that I thought I had seen him in large meetings. I can check my appointment calendar which is the only document I have of record from my Washington days and see whether I met him in smaller meetings or alone if that would be helpful to you.

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Mr. Belin: It would. I'd like to have you do it, please.

Mr. Bundy: Fine.

Mr. Belin: OK. Well, thank you very much.

(END OF TAPE)

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